

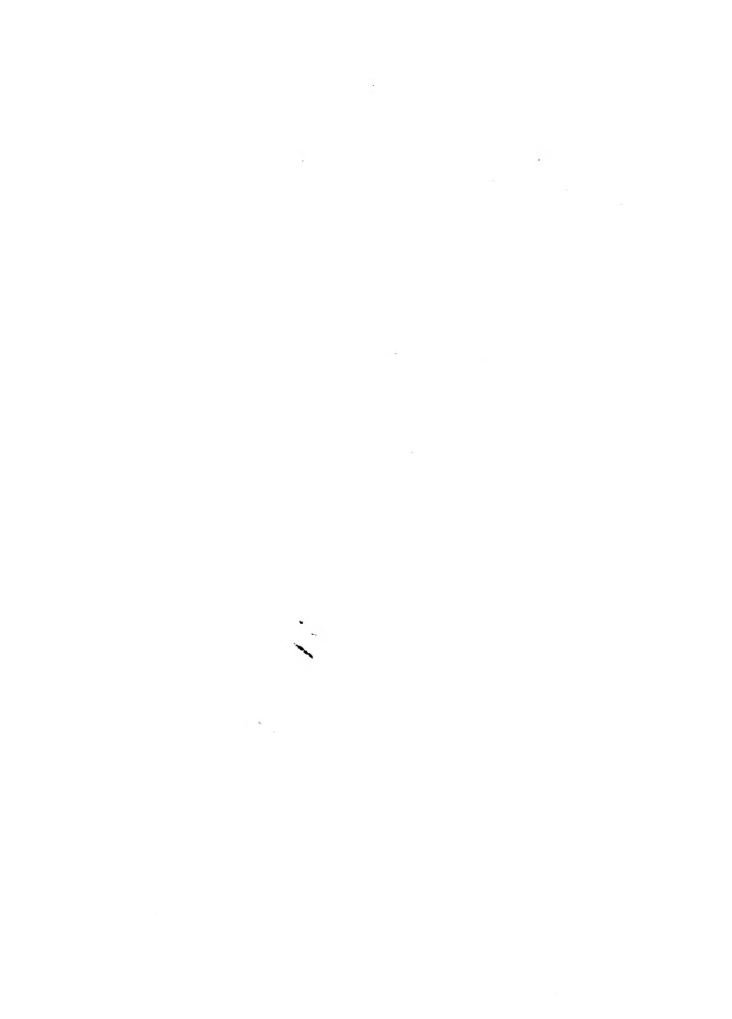
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a Legend of
Santa Francesca.



L. D. S. SPALDING.

A LEGEND
OF
SANTA FRANCESCA.



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BY
L. D. S. SPALDING



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A LEGEND
OF
SANTA FRANCESCA.

THERE'S a quaint and beautiful legend
Of saintly Francesca the Blest,
Which comes like a sweet benediction
To weary ones longing for rest,—
To weary ones longing for respite
From ceaseless demands of the day,
Which leave scarce one moment for quiet,
One moment to think or to pray.

FRANCESCA was noble and wealthy,
With many a burden to bear,—

A wife with a husband to honor

And children who needed her care.

Yet ever with sweetest devotion

Her duties and prayers were combined :
In the world, yet with heart far above it,
Her life with religion entwined.

IT was morn in the old Roman City :
Through the richly stained glass streamed
the sun,

In a room where, in rapt meditation,

Francesca was kneeling alone.

She knelt with her hands clasped before her,

Her gaze wholly fixed on her book,
Where from words of divine inspiration
Her daily instruction she took.

SHE was reading in silence and quiet
Her psalm from the dearly-loved book,
“I am alway by Thee, Thou hast holden
Me by my right hand —” when a knock
Called her forth from her sweet meditation,
And a servant said humbly: “My lord
Prays you come to the hall; he is waiting
To give you a message and word.”

WITH never a murmur she listened,
And joined him at once in his plan
For bidding some friends come to supper;
Then again with her psalm she began.
Again the same words she was reading,
“I am alway by Thee,” when a sound
Of tottering steps in the passage,
And her dear little daughter she found.

THE child had a favor to ask her,
And eagerly spoke her request,
While her mother as willingly listened
Until she had set her at rest.
Then once more she knelt at her prayer-desk,
Once more she was at the same text,
When again came the steward to seek her,
And show her what duty was next.

IN the hall she found three holy pilgrims;
For Christ's sake a lodging they claim,
And she gives them a warm, loving greeting,
And welcomes them there in His name.
A fourth time she read, "I am by Thee;
Thou hast holden me by my right hand,"
When again she is called, and in waiting
She sees a gay courtier stand.

“IT is well,” said the holy Francesca;
“Till we come to the presence of God,
We can serve Him as well in these duties,
And follow the paths that He trod.”
So she talked of the hawking and supper
To one who cared only for these,
And thought even thus she might honor
Her Lord, and her Master might please.

AND then as she thankfully left him
And once more re-entered to pray,
Lo! a vision of glory angelic
Just met her, — then vanished away.
One glimpse of a form full of beauty, —
She knew that an angel was there,
And prostrate with awe and emotion,
She fell at her footstool in prayer.

AND there in her book full of lightness,
All blazing in letters of gold, —
Of gold far beyond earthly brightness, —
The beautiful verses were told.
And she knew that her love was accepted,
Her duties so cheerfully borne
Had been wrought into gold by the Master,
Who saw all that happened that morn.

FOR us is the beautiful lesson
Of saintly Francesca the Blest,
That the cheerful acceptance of duty
Ever pleases Our Father the best.
His angels unseen hover near us;
He knows every step that we take;
And the lowliest duty is honored
When done for the Master's sake.

“Nevertheless I am alway by Thee, for Thou hast
holden me by my right hand.

“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel: and after
that receive me with glory.”

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